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AUTHOR Abi-Karam, Norma; Love, Jim C.
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ABSTRACT

According to previous research, achieving women display nontraditional personality traits and are influenced by affiliative motives. To examine the needs exhibited by professional women who have made significant achievements, 23 career women (physicians, attorneys, veterinarians, business women, politicians, and artists) completed the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS). An analysis of the results showed that, in comparison to the profile of a large group of normative women, the subjects' EPPS profile was found to be significantly different in 13 of the 15 variables examined. The group had high needs for achievement, exhibition, autonomy, dominance, change, and heterosexuality, and low needs for deference, order, affiliation, succorance, abasement, endurance, and nurturance. These findings suggest that this group has incorporated masculine instrumental behaviors, which enhanced their ability to achieve, without introducing specific achievement-affiliation conflicts. (Author/BL)

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Personality Needs Profile of Some Professional Women

Norma Abi-Karam and Jim C. Love

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Running head: Personality Needs Profile

Abstract

Twenty-three professional women who had made significant achievements in non-traditional fields were administered the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) to ascertain their need patterns. The group's EPPS profile was compared to the profile of a large group of normative women and was found to be significantly different in 13 of the 15 variables examined. It was suggested that this group has incorporated masculine instrumental behaviors which enhanced their ability to achieve but do not appear to have introduced specific achievement-affiliation conflicts.

Personality Needs Profile of Some Professional Women

As part of an ongoing investigation into the demographic and personality factors influencing achievement in women, the following study was designed to assess the needs of some professional women who have attained a recognized measure of achievement.

The literature on personality variables of achieving women (particularly their motives) stress that high achieving women are quite different from more traditional women (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz, 1972). Some previous research indicates that achievement behavior in women is influenced by affiliative motives (V. J. Crandall, 1963; V. C. Crandall, 1964; Garai and Scheinfeld, 1968). Horner's (1972) and Hoffman's (1974) inquiries into the "fear of success" concept stress affiliative-achievement conflicts and strongly suggest an inverse relationship between these specific needs. However, Trigg and Perlman (1976) found that among students choosing traditional (nursing, dental technician) and non-traditional (physician, dentist) careers, the affiliative needs were lower and achievement needs were higher for the non-traditional group.

These constrasting findings suggest the appropriateness of examining these and other needs in career women who have completed formal education or training periods and have achieved success in a broad spectrum of non-traditional careers. Thus, the investigation of need clusters is important to the understanding of the selective and adaptive response patterns which lead to achievement.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to explore the relative strengths

of some needs that may influence female achievement and to examine the pattern of needs exhibited by women who have made significant achievements. Assuming that the complex issues that women face in non-traditional careers (e.g., sex-differences with respect to physical processes, brain organization, communication patterns and power-centered interactions; Basow, 1980) may create different emphasis on various needs, as assessment of these need patterns will contribute to a better understanding of this group, and, hopefully, result in the designing of more effective educational programs for women with a strong need to achieve in non-traditional careers. Additionally, both vocational and clinical therapists may become more sensitive to the special needs and possible conflicts of these women.

Methods

Subjects

Professional women (career physicians, attorneys, veterinarians, business women, politicians and artists) in Clark County, Nevada, were invited to participate in this study. The mean age of the participants was 38.04 (s.d. = 10.7). The mean years of education was 17.4. The average years of working in the field was 10.8 and the average salary was $41,170 (1980). Twelve were married, nine were divorced, and two were single. The response rate from each professional group was nearly equal except only two artists were represented.

Instrument

The Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) is a standardized test used for counseling and research. It provides measures of 15 normal personality variables, such as the need for Achievement, Dominance, Affiliation and others. EPPS is one of the most comprehensive inventories

designed to assess the relative strength of needs based on Murray's theory of manifest need system (Edwards, 1959). This instrument permits individual as well as group assessment of these needs and provides for a comparison with a general population.

Procedure

A major criterion for possible inclusion in the study was that the participants had already made a significant achievement through their own efforts. Once this was established each was then sent an initial letter explaining the purpose of this study and a follow-up phone call was made to ascertain whether they were willing to participate. Those who so indicated were sent a coded packet consisting of various materials including the test booklet and answer sheet for the EPPS.

Twenty-three subjects completed packets that were returned to the investigators. Names of the participants were then removed and only previously assigned code numbers were utilized in the analysis.

The 23 returned answer sheets were hand scored and the raw scores for each variable were combined into a group profile. The means of each variable were then compared (using a two-tailed t-test) to those of the normative group of adult women (n = 4932) as given in the EPPS manual (Edwards, 1959).

Results

The means and standard deviations of the raw score obtained by the subjects on the EPPS variables are shown in Table 1. Findings indicated

Insert Table 1 about here

that compared to Edwards' General Adult Sample of Women, this sample was

significantly lower on Deference, Order, Affiliation, Succorance, Abasement, Nurturance, and Endurance. The variables Introception and Aggression were not significantly different from the normative group.

In order to develop a group profile, the means of the raw scores of each EPPS variable were converted to their percentile equivalents as were those scores of the General Adult Sample of Women reported by Edwards (1959). These profiles are depicted in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Discussion

Although the participants of this study manifested need levels significantly different from the normative group of women in 13 of 15 EPPS measures, the major finding is the pattern of high and low needs. A review of Table 1 indicates these two distinct need clusters:

High Need Cluster	Brief Description
Achievement	- to do one's best, to be successful
Exhibition	- to be the center of attention
Autonomy	- to feel free; to do what one wants
Dominance	- to supervise and direct others
Change	- to do new and different things
Heterosexuality	- to seek activities involving the opposite sex
Low Need Cluster	
Deference	- to do what is expected
Order	- to have things organized
Affiliative	- to be loyal and to cultivate friends

Succorance - to have help and understanding from others

Abasement - to feel guilty and to accept blame

Endurance - to complete any job undertaken, to perserve

Nurturance - to help and sympathize with others

[The variables "Introception" (to analyze feelings and motives of self and others), and "Aggression" (to be angry, seek revenge and criticize others) were not significantly different from the normative group.]

An examination of the high need cluster reveals a response pattern similar to the male normative group. According to Edwards (1959), men in the normative group score higher than normative women on Achievement, Autonomy, Dominance, Heterosexuality, Exhibition and Aggression. With the exception of the variable Aggression, the sample group members scored significantly higher on these variables than the female normative group. Thus, the expressed high needs of the sample group of professional women appear to be more similar to the normative male needs. This finding is not surprising when one considers that concepts such as success and achievement are still generally defined as masculine traits.

This group of achieving women presents a picture of unique personality profiles. The group's high scores on the Dominance (96%), Exhibition (80%), Heterosexuality (80%), and Autonomy (75%) need scales reflect women who are leaders with a strong ability to influence their environment. They are motivated to do their best, to be a recognized authority and to accomplish significantly in a "man's world." Their high score on Heterosexuality reflects their acceptance of this world into which they carry their personal and social transactions with the opposite sex. The high need score on

Autonomy suggests their need of independence. They are unconventional, non-conforming and have chosen to take care of their own lives by pursuing decisions regardless of what tradition dictates.

Additionally, a high heterosexual need is probably reflective of the locus of their achievement activity. Having chosen the non-traditional world as a work place, relating in this world is essentially relating to men, whether the men be husbands, friends, or colleagues. This is especially true since the number of women having chosen non-traditional careers is still small and female peers are greatly outnumbered by men. Finally, the sub-cluster of the high need variables Exhibition, Autonomy and Change indicate that these women seek the stimulation of a challenge and are not afraid to be responsible as well as visible.

An examination of the low need clusters is revealing with respect to women in non-traditional careers. Edwards (1959) indicates that there is a general pattern of responses that may be expected since individuals tend to score significantly higher or lower on those selected variables which are stereotypically associated with the masculine and feminine types. Traditionally, women express higher needs on Deference, Affiliation, Introception, Succorance, Abasement, Nurturance, Change and Order. With the exception of the variable Introception, our sample of achieving women scored significantly lower than the normative group on all of these needs. There is a congruency among the low need clusters of Deference (25%), Affiliation (28%), Succorance (31%), Abasement (6%), and Nurturance (17%). This particular group is not strongly motivated to associate with others. They appear freer from the social concerns of the normative women and not as greatly influenced by their interaction with others. Their self-esteem is based

more upon self-evaluation than on the opinions of others. Thus, the low need score on Deference fits well with the elevated Autonomy score.

In general, the Affiliative need appears related to needs for Deference, Succorance, Nurturance and, perhaps, Abasement in that the affiliative motive may influence the level of expression of this need sub-cluster. The finding that the cluster is significantly low gives increased emphasis to the reduced affiliative needs in some women in non-traditional careers. Additionally, when nurturance and succorance needs are low, it may be stated that these women are not stereotypically trading nurturance for succorance.

Order and Endurance are associated with traditional achievement behaviors. Low need scores on these two variables (12% and 32% respectively), especially when associated with very high Achievement and Dominance, present a picture of highly involved, comfortably assertive women who expect others to attend to details, allowing them the freedom to pursue their main goals. When viewed in conjunction with this sub-cluster, the high need for Change (68%) suggests a strong need for experimentation, becoming "role innovators" (Tangri, 1975:243) who are committed to changing the traditional expectations they perceive as barriers in their careers. The variable Endurance is frequently associated with achievement as witness to the ancient homily, "if at first you don't succeed, try . . . try again." This group of women are not oriented to task completion to increase their self-esteem. They do not need to prove to themselves that a job undertaken is meaningful only when the results are seen. They may, in fact, welcome interruptions to experiment with more unconventional means of resolving problems.

The expression of a low need for Endurance and an average need for Introception (59%) contrasts with an earlier finding (Hoyt and Kennedy, 1958) that these two characteristics are related to higher career aspirations in women. Since achievement is more generally defined as a masculine trait, the need for order and endurance are traditionally incorporated in that concept. A uniqueness of this sample is that they have scored low on the two traditional needs that are indicators of achievement, according to Hoyt's findings. This aspect lends credence to several investigators (Bem, 1974, 1975; Stein and Bailey, 1975) that achieving women expand their sex role constructs to include some (but not all) aspects of the masculine sex role. Basow (1980) suggests that the ". . . more adaptive, flexible, and competent pattern of responding occurred among more masculine individuals, independent of their gender" (p. 189). Thus, for some women, expansion of the sex role constructs may result in fewer achievement conflicts. Indeed, in a study conducted by Hoffman and Fidell (1979) on characteristics of various feminine sex roles and their effect on general adjustment, they emphasized that conguency between attitude and behavior contributes more to adjustment than either attitude or sex-typing alone.

Relative to adjustment, one need which may be most important in regards to its influence on the relative strengths of all other low cluster needs, is Abasement. Our group scored extremely low (6%) on this variable which provides strong evidence of an absence of guilt with respect to their low scores on Nurturance and Affiliation. Conversely, as professionals, this particular dynamic enhances their freedom for the expression of high achievement and dominance needs devoid of significant amounts of Aggression (67%) and Introception (59%).

Thus, our findings suggest that some achieving women in non-traditional careers do expand their sex-role constructs, incorporating masculine instrumental behaviors. The pattern and clusters of their needs further suggest that this incorporation is essentially conflict-free and, while the integration is traditionally masculine by societal standards, there appears to be a universal mode of behaviors related to achievement which, like talent and ability, transcends gender. Ultimately, this strengthens the premise that women need not give up their femininity to achieve; they merely need to redefine for themselves an expanded concept of femininity.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations on the EPPS Variables for a Sample of Twenty-three Achieving Women

Variable	Mean	SD	t
Achievement	19.26	4.55	5.98***
Deference	11.39	3.03	5.25***
Order	9.70	3.21	8.76***
Exhibition	14.48	4.51	3.18**
Autonomy	14.56	3.91	3.02**
Affiliation	15.17	4.55	2.78**
Introception	15.74	4.04	.54
Succorance	10.17	4.56	2.82**
Dominance	19.35	4.44	9.81***
Abasement	8.48	4.93	8.16***
Nurturance	13.87	4.36	5.06***
Change	17.98	4.23	2.23*
Endurance	13.96	4.48	2.71**
Heterosexuality	13.57	4.90	5.31***
Aggression	11.57	4.27	1.58

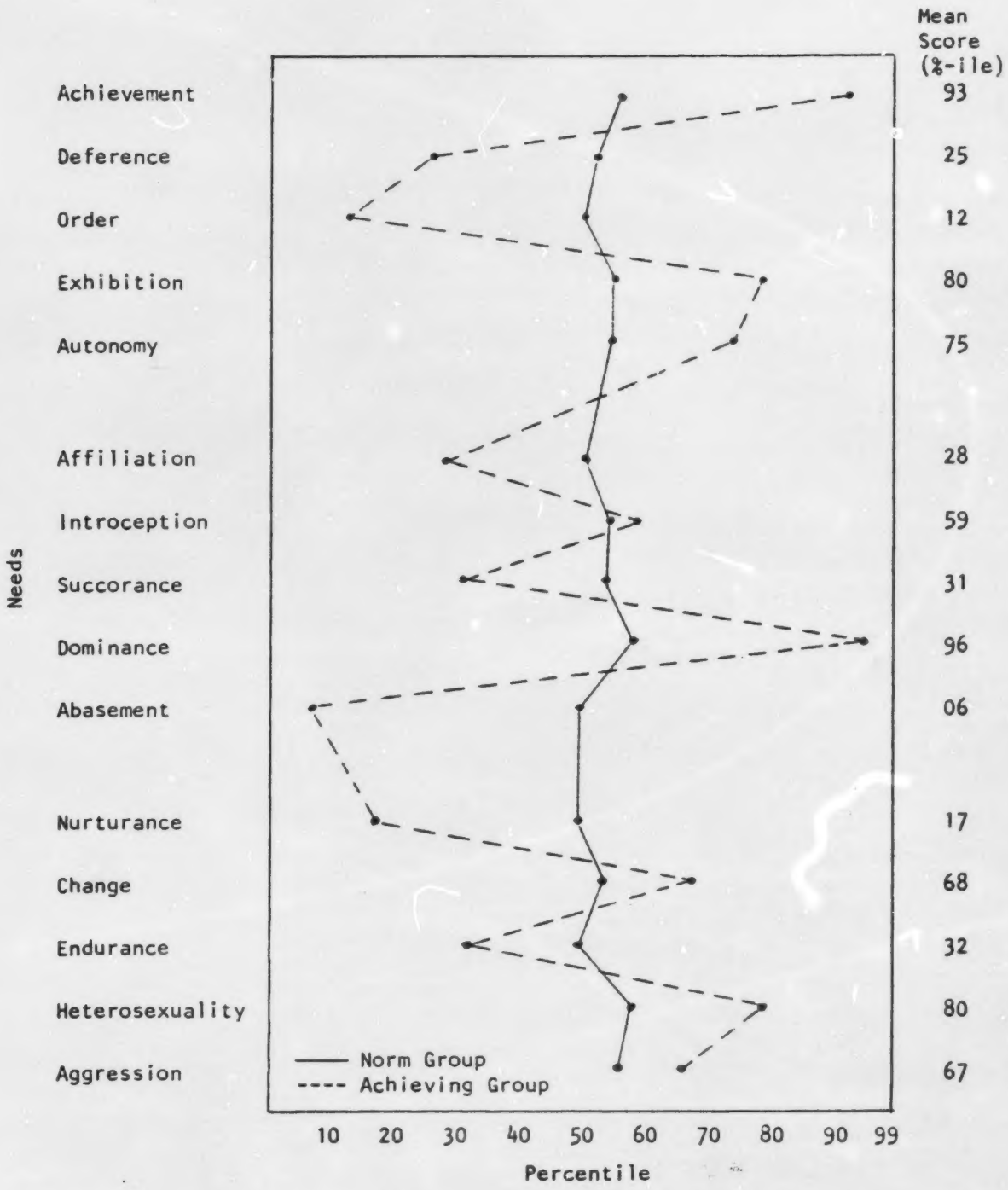
*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Needs profile of 23 achieving women contrasted with the EPPS normative group (n = 4932).


Mean Score (%-ile)
Achievement
Deference
Order
Exhibition
Autonomy
Affiliation
Introception
Succorance
Dominance
Abasement
Nurturance
Change
Endurance
Heterosexuality
Aggression
Needs
93
25
12
80
75
28
59
31
96
06
17
68
32
80
67
Norm Group
Achieving Group
10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 99
Percentile